

*C. A. Snyder*

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THE  
**CHRISTIAN REFORMER,**  
OR  
**Evangelical Miscellany.**

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*Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.* PAUL.

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**VOL. I.**

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**ADDRESS TO THE READER.**

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THE periodical publication, of which this is the First Number, is commenced for the sole purpose of diffusing religious knowledge, promoting scriptural inquiries, and exciting serious reflection, particularly amongst that class of readers, whom more bulky, laboured and expensive works are not likely to reach. At the same time, it is not intended that these pages shall be disgraced by folly and vulgarity. The Christian Reformer shall be affable without indecent familiarity, communicative without frivolity, firm without rudeness, and zealous without bigotry. In these times, controversy cannot be wholly excluded from an Evangelical Miscellany, but the very title of it requires that controversy should not be personal, but calm and temperate, adverse indeed to what is conceived to be error, but tender towards such as are believed to err.

It was found difficult to adopt a title for the present work, which should be at once significant, and yet not sectarian or arrogant. The title actually chosen has at least the recommendation of denoting the design of the miscellany: it is called the *Reformer*, because its object is to promote the true principles of the Reformation, the sufficiency of the scriptures, and the right of private judgment and of free public worship; and it is further denominated *Evangelical*, because it is established for the assertion and defence of what its conductor and supporters consider the true and pure gospel, *the faith once delivered to the saints*, unmixed with *the commandments and traditions of men*.\*

Experience only can determine how far the Christian

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\* The two essays immediately following this Address will, perhaps, explain and justify the two-fold title of THE CHRISTIAN REFORMER, OR EVANGELICAL MISCELLANY.

Reformer will be worthy of public patronage, but such as it is, the Editor commends it to the candid judgment of his readers, and to the blessing of God.



*Jesus Christ a Moral and Religious Reformer.*

Jesus Christ appeared in the character of a reformer, a moral reformer, and his religion is designed to make us wiser and better, and to improve our temper and conduct.

Our Lord intended and commenced a great revolution in the opinions of mankind, but all the doctrinal changes meditated by him, were planned with a view to their happy influence on the morals of society. The great doctrine of immortality by means of a resurrection, was framed as a moving power in the cause of righteousness, as a reason to incline men to deny ungodliness and all worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and piously. This motive was wanted by the world, and this christianity supplied. Without it, the most perfect creed and the purest system of morals would have been taught with little effect. It was not merely the doctrine of future existence that Jesus taught; *that* had been taught, if not by Moses, yet certainly by the Pharisees, and adverted to by many of the Pagan philosophers; it was future existence by a revival of the dead, of which revival he himself was an example. His own resurrection, a plain fact, was the basis of his gospel; hence its simplicity, hence its acceptableness to the common people,—hence its efficacy in renewing and purifying the human heart. From the single fact that Jesus, who had been dead, was alive again, flowed not only the main doctrines of religion, but also all moral precepts; for the resurrection of man explains and enforces his responsibility as a moral agent: in the argument of the apostle, God, in raising Jesus from the dead, “hath given assurance to all men that he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained.” Acts xvii. 31.

I here consider the christian doctrine, as taught by the apostles, the doctrine of Christ, for though his own resurrection, which was the main pillar of their doctrine, was not established till after the conclusion of his personal ministry, yet he himself anticipated this event; his instruc-

tions were delivered with a view to it, and his apostles preached it by his authority.

It appears then, that in the christian scheme, there is an intimate, an inseparable connection between truth and righteousness, between sound doctrines and good morals; and that, in strict propriety of speech, Christ was a *moral reformer*.

He found the world in a state of great depravity, the law had lost its power over men's minds; its obligations were frittered away by idle traditions and by a pernicious casuistry; faith and virtue were separated; and the corruption of religion was accompanied and indicated by general profligacy. He beheld this condition of his countrymen with pity and concern; and was prompted no less by his benevolence than by a divine commission to undertake the vindication of truth and the restoration of virtue. Under the joint impulse of piety and charity, he stepped forward to reclaim those that were in error, and raise those that were degraded by vice. Hence he says, — *To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.* John xviii. 37. *For I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.* Matt. ix. 13.

A reformer must expect to meet opposition and to be assailed with obloquy. A long state of corruption begets prejudices in its favour, and in a course of time men's temporal interests become intertwined with things as they are; a reformation, however needful, will be an innovation; and because some men have sought change from bad motives, the bigoted many, and the interested few, will hastily conclude and loudly assert, that he who seeks and hopes to ameliorate the world, meditates convulsions in society that may turn out to his own advantage.

See here the ground of opposition to our great Teacher, and see here, the plea for hostility against those of his followers, who, not content with opinions because they are ancient, or with manners because they are general, imitate his example, and seek to reform the creed, and perfect the lives of each other, and of mankind at large. But, however we may be looked upon by the world, let us never forget that we are the disciples of a reformer, the most thorough reformer, the most zealous reformer, the most courageous reformer that mankind ever saw. When we cease to look forward to something better than we have



yet seen, we lose the spirit of Jesus. In his name, the true and faithful witness, let us go on, not considering ourselves as having already attained to all truth or righteousness, but pressing forward towards the mark of our high calling.

The general principles of Christianity, as well as the example of its founder, impel us to take part in every reformation. Those principles are, that truth is unspeakably important, because infinitely salutary in its tendency; that every man is bound, by his responsibility to God, to promote the best interests of his fellow creatures; and that he who labours most and best in the christian vineyard, shall be happiest now and highest hereafter.

So far then from being ashamed of our zeal for truth and virtue, let us fan it to a brighter flame; taking care only that its heat and light be supplied and replenished by the pure spirit of benevolence.

What though we be called enthusiasts and proselytists; no man that ever did the world any good escaped similar reproach—they called the master of the house Beelzebub—and is it to be wondered at that a stigma is fixed upon his servants?

Be it, however, our main care, that we are not the disciples of a reformer in part only—that we do not spend our strength against error alone and not against vice also. In our attempts at general reformation, let us not neglect our own individual improvement. Let us keep our eye steadily fixed upon the moral purport of our faith. Let us be what our religion supposes us, what our master requires us to be. Let us by good works, silence gainsayers, attract inquirers, show the beauty of holiness, and glorify our Father in Heaven.



### *On the Term Evangelical.*

The term *Evangelical* applied to preachers and opinions, is become the watch-word of a party; and, unless a good word is to be for ever consigned to a bad use, it is very desirable that it should be employed by such Christians as are not of the party, in order to its being recovered to its ancient, lawful, and innocent meaning. Half the world

are governed by names; and to allow a sect,—though the larger,—the epithets of *sound—orthodox—evangelical*, and the like, is, in popular estimation, to concede the truth of their opinions: he contends under manifest disadvantage who disputes with an *evangelical* believer, and against the *orthodox* party and a *sound* creed. And, grant the above honourable names to the prevailing sect, and they will in return, bestow upon you, if you are not enrolled of the sect, the opposite names, *unsound, heterodox, and non-evangelical*. Thus, the public mind is unfairly influenced; the cause cannot be equitably tried: on their entrance into the court, one party lies under reproach, and the other has the ear of the judge.

To attempt to set this matter right is one main reason of this little work being denominated an *Evangelical Miscellany*: and in furtherance of the same object and in justification of the title hereby assumed, a few observations on the term *evangelical* are submitted to the reader.

*Evangelical* (from the Greek word which stands for the gospel—good-tidings) literally signifies *belonging to the gospel*—appertaining to the good tidings announced in the Christian revelation. It is, therefore, much the same as Christian: and in this general sense, every disciple of Jesus Christ is entitled to take and wear it, as being, in his own judgment, a believer in the gospel. There would be no dispute, or complaint, were the word no otherwise employed and appropriated. For all sects and parties, Roman Catholics and Protestants, Trinitarians and Unitarians, Calvinists and Arminians may, without giving up their peculiar opinions, acknowledge each other to be *Evangelical* and Christian. The acknowledgment amounts to no more, than that each denomination admits and avows the truth of the history and doctrine (as he understands it) of the New Testament.

If the derivation of the term *Evangelical* be considered, they who use it most, will be found to deserve it least. It may mean *according to the gospels*, or books of the *Evangelists*. But how ill does this character agree with modern orthodoxy, as it is reputed, which often flies from the plain history of Christ in the *Gospels*, and shelters and fortifies itself in the obscurities of the *Epistles*. Instead of *Evangelical*, its professors should be called *Epistolary* Christians. It is not intended by this remark to disparage the epistles of the New Testament, nor is it meant that they do not

agree with the gospels. But surely the epistles ought to be explained by the gospels, and not the gospels by the epistles. Plainness and simplicity are the chief features of the gospels, but in the epistles there are many things "hard to be understood:" such, at least, is the express acknowledgment of Peter with regard to the Epistles of Paul, the most numerous and important of the collection. (2 Pet. iii. 16.) To the four gospels, then, the inquirer, and especially the unlearned inquirer, must go, in the first place, for a knowledge of the truth taught by Jesus; and these books will be prized by him above all others, even in the sacred volume, in the proportion that he sets Christ above Paul or Cephas. He who thus appeals to the Evangelists, in all questions relating to Christ and his doctrine, is the true *Evangelical* Christian.

The word *Evangelical* may mean *belonging to*, or *agreeing with*, *good tidings*. The kindred verb is used by the angel who announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds, (Luke ii. 10, 11.)—"Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Here was an *evangelical* message—an annunciation of universal good. The good tidings of the angel were taken up in the chorus of the "multitude of the heavenly host," who (v. 13) were "suddenly with the angel, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." This is an *evangelical* hymn. But are *modern evangelical* hymns and messages of this description? Do they declare good news—good news to *all*? Do they not, alas! on the contrary, describe an angry God, satisfying his justice in the blood of his only and innocent son? Do they not divide men into the elect and non-elect; the latter, according to present appearances, infinitely more numerous than the former;—and do they not doom this great majority of the human race to certain hopeless exclusion from the mercies of God? Do they not teach that all mankind are born under a curse—naturally corrupt, and enemies to God, hating him and hateful to him? Do they not ascribe the difference which there is between man and man in the sight of God, not to man's righteousness or unrighteousness, but to God's partiality? Do they not appal non-elect sinners by teaching that they *cannot* save themselves, and that God *will* not? Finally, do they not represent these un-



happy children of a merciless Father, as doomed to *never-ending, constantly-growing pains and torments, agonies and terrors*, without any power on their part to escape them? So that in one immense part of God's dominions, Evil and Misery will erect their throne, and reign triumphantly throughout the ages of Eternity! Is this good news!! If such doctrines as these were contained in the *gospel*, the term would be a contradiction, for more fearful, more dreadful tidings for the great mass of the children of men, could not be proclaimed!

By a like defiance of sense and propriety, the same doctrines are frequently termed the *doctrines of grace*, whilst by them all grace is excluded, and rigid justice, demanding satisfaction, is set on high, and vengeance eternally prevails and rejoices.

But, in truth, there is no gospel where there is not *good news to all*; and that system is most *evangelical*, which draws from the New Testament the largest conclusions as to the good will of God to man.

*Evangelical* christianity makes much of Jesus Christ, but represents God his Father and our Father, *as all in all*. But how is Christ magnified?—by being represented as the patron of a sect, or the *Saviour of the world*? And in what consists the glory of God?—in fierce and unquenchable burnings, or in the mild and sweet and healing beams of love?

Such a gospel, alone worthy of the name, is indeed an object of reproach and contempt to most of those, who call themselves exclusively *evangelical*; but amidst men's hard judgments, the disciple may satisfactorily hope for the approbation of that Master, whom he delights to consider and represent as the Teacher of Wisdom and Benevolence, and may confidently look for the blessing of that Father, whom filial reverence, gratitude and love, have approached, as an all-perfect, infinitely-good, and universally and eternally-merciful Being.



### *A Brief Statement of Unitarian views of Religion.*

The sentiments of Unitarians are generally condemned, because they are not understood. The manner in which they are usually exhibited in the books and pulpit addresses—

ses of their opponents, is more frequently a caricature, than a faithful representation. It is therefore thought, that if these views were presented to the mind in a connected form, that they would meet with general approbation, and their exact agreement with the plain language of Christ and his Apostles, be at once perceived. Under this impression the following brief statement is given.

### A CHRISTIAN'S CREED.

I believe in *one God*, the *Father* of our Saviour Jesus Christ and of men, who is infinitely wise, infinitely powerful, and infinitely good, the Creator of all worlds, visible and invisible; and that *he* is the only living and true God. And I believe that this doctrine of the *Unity*, or of *one God*, is the fundamental article of all true religion, both *natural* and *revealed*; that it is founded in the first principles and obvious deductions of *reason*, strongly asserted in the *Jewish* revelation, and as clearly taught in the writings of the *New Testament*.

I also believe in *Jesus Christ*, the one Mediator whom God hath appointed and raised up, to be the great Prophet, Teacher, and Saviour of mankind.

In particular, I believe that Jesus was a man (in the true and proper sense of the word;) that he "was born of a woman, made under the law;" that he was liable to bodily wants and weaknesses, that he suffered hunger, thirst, and weariness, had the innocent infirmities of our nature, and was subject to death.

I moreover believe, that he was the great Messenger of grace, mercy, and peace, to sinners of the human race, and was sent by God with a high commission, to teach us heavenly truth, to instruct us how we may obtain everlasting life, to set us an example of steadfast virtue amidst the temptations of this world, and of obedience to the will of God.

I believe that Jesus of Nazareth, "a man approved of God," was the Messiah foretold by Moses and the Jewish Prophets; that he was styled in a peculiar and eminent sense the Son of God, or his only begotten or well beloved Son; and distinguished as such by a divine commission which he received from his God and Father, to declare his will and make known his mercy to the sons of men.

I believe that Jesus, the Christ, being thus authorized,



and sent of God, was abundantly qualified and fitted for every part of his ministry, by a communication of the divine wisdom and power, called the *Spirit of God*, or the *Holy Spirit*, given to him in greater abundance than had been bestowed on any of the ancient Prophets or Messengers of the Most High; and that in his moral character, he was superior to all the children of men; that he was perfectly innocent, without guile, the holy one and the just; the brightest and the best example of piety, humility, and charity.

I believe that, in fulfilling the benevolent and gracious design of his heavenly mission, he acted as a faithful preacher of truth and righteousness; and that, when he had executed his divine embassy, with wonderful patience, resignation, and constancy of mind, he fell a sacrifice to the rage and malice of his enemies; but that, in reward of his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, he was on the third day raised from the dead by the power of God; that he was afterwards taken up into heaven, being exalted at the Father's right hand, to the highest dignity, dominion, and glory; and that he will one day come again to be the final judge both of the living and the dead, according to the appointment of God his Father.

I believe that, in order to spread the *gospel of the kingdom*, and establish a church in the world, the apostles and first disciples of our Saviour were not only divinely *illuminated*, but endowed with power from on high, God himself working with them by many incontestible convincing signs and miracles, that the faith of Christians might stand, not in the *wisdom of men*, but in the *power of God*.

I believe, that the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins upon repentance, is fully taught in the *gospel*; that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and another life after this; that "God will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained;" and that all men shall be rewarded or punished hereafter, according to their works in this life.

In a word, I believe that the *religion of Jesus* is founded upon the most plain and indubitable facts,—that it perfectly corresponds with the most honourable and worthy notions we have of the Deity, and with all those natural principles which God hath implanted in the human breast; and that the New Testament, which was ratified by the death and resurrection of Jesus, is to us in these last ages,

the only true *standard* of faith and worship, a perfect *rule* of life, and the blessed *charter* of all our hopes and privileges,  
P.



## PLAIN THOUGHTS ON SACRIFICES.

### ESSAY I.

Many things have been taken for granted respecting Sacrifices, which require proof, before any important conclusion can be properly built upon them; but which it appears never have been proved, nor ever can be. It has been taken for granted, that sacrifices were originally of divine institution and appointment; that from the first they were offered in consequence of sin, and as an atonement for it; that they were all along typical, and that those who offered them were required to look through them to another and a better sacrifice, to that of Christ, as the great anti-type; that bloody sacrifices were always vicarious; and that when Christ is spoken of as a sacrifice, the language is to be construed as literally as such language is where it occurs in the Jewish law. All these things being taken for granted, it is concluded that Jesus Christ offered himself as a vicarious sacrifice for mankind, and that his death was the only true and proper sacrifice for sins, the only atonement or satisfaction that could be available and procure salvation. These things are asserted with so much confidence, and thought so unquestionable, among the reputed orthodox, that many persons never think of examining them; nor of searching the scriptures to see whether they be true or not. Each of the above points I intend examining.

The origin of sacrifices is involved in obscurity. Whether they were originally instituted and commanded by the Almighty, or were voluntary offerings, arising from a sense of dependence and feelings of gratitude in the persons who offered them, is no where said in scripture. It belongs to those who assert their divine origin to prove it; and what is without proof can be no matter of faith, whatever men may conjecture about it. As the scriptures are silent respecting sacrifices being from the first a divine institution, there can be no authority for saying that they were;—on the contrary, had God instituted them, it is natural to

expect that so extraordinary a circumstance would have been mentioned by the sacred historian, as it was afterwards when they became a part of a divine economy, though at the latter period they ceased to be that novelty which they must have been in the first age of the world.—Had they been of divine appointment, is it likely they would have been so generally neglected as they appear to have been by pious and good men, until after the deluge? Convinced that they owed every thing to God, in the infancy of society and of the human mind, men, influenced by gratitude and a sense of dependence, might be led to present their offerings as an acknowledgment to him, and he, when he approved of their character and conduct, might cause lightning to descend and consume what they presented, as a token of his acceptance of them and of their gifts. This hypothesis is agreeable to the earliest account we have of sacrifices.

GEN. IV. 3, 5:—“And in process of time it came to pass that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD; and Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering; but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect.” This is the scripture account of the first sacrifices or offerings which were presented to God; nor are we informed of any other that were offered till after the flood. We read of men calling upon the name of the LORD, of *Enoch's* walking with God, of Noah's being a preacher of righteousness; but it is not said that they offered any sacrifices during that long period, or that sacrifices formed any part of the worship of God from the death of Abel to the close of the antediluvian age.—This would be very strange, were it true, as some suppose, that ever since sin entered into the world, sacrifices, either typical ones or that of Christ, have been at the foundation of all true religion and acceptable worship.

Had the first sacrifices been of divine institution, it is reasonable to suppose, that directions would have been given respecting what should be offered, as was the case afterwards among the Jews; but, according to the above account, each person seems to have been left to offer what he thought most proper. The word rendered *offering* may mean a present or voluntary gift. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, calls Abel's offerings *his gifts*. (Chap. xi, 4.) God is said to have respect to Abel, and then to



his offering; and to disapprove of Cain, and then of his offering, which shews that the offering was accepted or rejected, according to the character of him who presented it, and that the acceptance or rejection of the offering, was a testimony of the acceptance or rejection of the person who offered it. The LORD said to Cain, (verse 7,) "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" This shews that the acceptance of the worshipper and of his offering depended on his moral character. It is said, (Heb. xi, 4.) "By faith Abel offered unto God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts. This shews that God's acceptance of his sacrifice was a testimony to the goodness of his character. It is not intimated that Abel presented his offering in consequence of any sin which he had committed, or that his sacrifice was an expression of his guilt and demerit: on the contrary, it is plainly asserted that he was already righteous, and that its being accepted was an evidence of his righteousness:—thus it appears, that the first acceptable sacrifice we read of was connected, not with sin, but with righteousness. It has been supposed that the reason why Abel and his offering were accepted while Cain and his offering were rejected, was because the former offered a bloody sacrifice, and looked through it, as a type, to another and a better sacrifice, that of Christ; but that the latter brought an improper offering, and presented it without having any regard to the future sacrifice of the promised seed. This supposition is totally unfounded, it takes for granted what is incapable of proof, that bloody sacrifices were offered before the flood: it also implies what is unreasonable, that Cain ought to have offered what was not properly his individual property, as he was a tiller of the ground, and Abel a keeper of sheep; nor is any fault found with what he offered, but with the spirit in which he did it; his character was disapproved. The supposition assumes an impossibility; that Cain, in presenting his offering, ought to have had a regard to the future death of Christ, an event of which it does not appear that he could have the most remote idea, as we do not find that it was foretold until nearly three thousand years after. How could either Cain or Abel have a knowledge of what was not revealed? What knowledge could they have of types or anti-types? What right have we to assume that things were revealed to them, of which to say the least, no mention is made in

those parts of the SACRED WRITINGS which relate to their times? It has been taken for granted that faith, in the earliest ages, had a reference to the sacrifice of Christ, but of this there is no proof, nor could that be an object of faith which was not revealed. The faith by which Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, is not said to consist in his believing that another should die in his place and stead, but in his believing that God is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him. (Heb. xi. 6.) Such the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews states to be the faith without which it is impossible to please God, the faith of the ancient worshippers of Jehovah, which produced such important effects; it had God and his goodness for its object; nor is it intimated that it had any relation to a vicarious sacrifice; had that been the case it is natural to expect that in the account given of the faith of the servants of God from the earliest times, it would have been mentioned.

Had sacrifices been introduced in consequence of sin entering into the world, and as an atonement for it, why was not Adam after he had sinned, directed to offer them? It is deserving of notice, that though in connection with the Mosaic account of the fall, the future deliverance of mankind was intimated in what is said of the seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head, nothing is mentioned of any atonement being required, or of any sacrifice being appointed, or of Adam's ever offering any. Man was left to build his hope upon the free mercy and grace of God, the very ground of hope placed before sinners throughout the Scriptures.

Thus it appears, that the only sacrifices we have an account of for more than sixteen hundred years after the creation, are those of Cain and Abel; that there is no proof of their being offered by divine appointment, or that they were sin-offerings, or that in the offering of them any reference was had to sin or the removal of it; but rather that they were gifts, designed to express piety to the Giver of all good, and that, except in the single case noticed, the acceptable worshippers, during that long period, worshipped God without sacrifices.

R. WRIGHT.

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*Remonstrance against an Ecclesiastical Establishment, by some of the Founders of the American Republic.*

[The following "Memorial and Remonstrance" was found amongst the papers of one of the eminent statesmen that took part in the foundation of the Independence of these United States. It was occasioned by an attempt in the "General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia," to introduce a law providing for the maintainance of a clergy. We take it from a periodical publication chiefly devoted to the interests of the liberal Quakers of America, entitled *The Berean*, and printed at Wilmington, Del.—Our readers will, we are sure, approve our choice of this admirable document for the pages of *The Christian Reformer*: it is a fit companion for the "Declaration on Rights," probably from the same hand, to which it repeatedly refers. The question of civil establishments of religion involves that of Religious Liberty, in which is included all that most nearly concerns us as men and as christians. This paper is particularly seasonable at this time, since an attempt has been so recently made in this state, to incorporate a Religious Society, which, if it had proved successful, might have paved the way for an establishment of religion in this country.]

*To the Honourable the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia: a Memorial and Remonstrance.*

We, the subscribers, citizens of the said commonwealth, having taken into serious consideration a bill printed by order of the last session of the General Assembly, entitled, "A Bill establishing a Provision for Teachers of the Christian Religion," and conceiving that the same, if finally armed with the sanctions of a law, will be a dangerous abuse of power, are bound, as faithful members of a free state, to remonstrate against it, and to declare the reasons by which we are determined. We remonstrate against the said bill,

Because, we hold it for a fundamental and undeniable truth, "that religion, or the duty which we owe to our Creator, and the manner of discharging it, can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence."<sup>\*</sup>

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\* Declaration on Rights, Art. 16.



The religion, then, of every man must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man; and it is the right of every man to exercise it as these may dictate. This right is, in its nature, an unalienable right. It is unalienable, because the opinions of men, depending only on the evidence contemplated in their own minds, cannot follow the dictates of other men: it is unalienable also, because what is here a right towards men, is a duty towards the Creator. It is the duty of every man to render to the Creator such homage, and *such only*, as he believes to be acceptable to him; this duty is precedent, both in order of time and in degree of obligation, to the claims of civil society. Before any man can be considered a member of civil society, he must be considered as a subject of the Governor of the universe; and if a member of civil society, who enters into any subordinate association, must always do it with a reservation of his duty to the general authority, much more must every man who becomes a member of any particular civil society do it *with the saving of his allegiance to the Universal Sovereign*. We maintain, therefore, that in matters of religion, no man's right is abridged by the institution of civil society; and that religion is wholly exempt from its cognizance. True it is, that no other rule exists by which any question which may divide a society can be ultimately determined, but the will of the majority; but it is also true, that the majority may trespass on the rights of the minority.

Because, if religion be exempt from the authority of the society at large, still less can it be subject to that of the legislative body. The latter are but the creatures and vicegerents of the former. Their jurisdiction is both derivative and limited. It is limited with regard to the co-ordinate departments; more necessarily is it limited with regard to the constituents. The preservation of a free government requires not merely that the metes and bounds which separate each department of power be invariably maintained, but more especially, that neither of them be suffered to overleap the great barrier which defends the rights of the people. The rulers who are guilty of such an encroachment, exceed the commission from which they derive their authority, and are tyrants. The people who submit to it, are governed by laws made neither by themselves nor an authority derived from them, and are slaves.

Because, it is proper to take alarm at the first experiment on our liberties. We hold this prudent jealousy to be the first duty of citizens, and one of the noblest characteristics of the late Revolution. The freemen of America did not wait till usurped power had strengthened itself by exercise, and entangled the question in precedents.— They saw all the consequences in the principle, and they avoided the consequences by denying the principle. We revere this lesson too much, soon to forget it. Who does not see that the same authority which can establish Christianity, in exclusion of all other religions, may establish with the same ease any particular sect of Christians, in exclusion of all other sects? That the same authority which can force a citizen to contribute three-pence only of his property for the support of only one establishment, may force him to conform to any one establishment, in all cases whatsoever?

Because, the bill violates that equality which ought to be the basis of every law, and which is more indispensable in proportion as the validity or expediency of any law is more liable to be impeached. If “all men are by nature equally free and independent,”\* all men are to be considered as entering into society on equal conditions, as relinquishing no more, and therefore retaining no less, one than another, of their rights. Above all, are they to be considered as retaining an “*equal* title to the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience.”† Whilst we assert for ourselves a freedom to embrace, to profess, and to observe, the religion which we believe to be of divine origin, we cannot deny an equal freedom to those whose minds have not yet yielded to the evidence which has convinced us. If this freedom be abused, it is an offence against God, *not against man*: to God, therefore, *not to men*, must an account of it be rendered. As the bill violates equality by subjecting some to peculiar burdens, so it violates the same principle by granting to others peculiar exemptions. Are the Quakers and Mennonists the only sects who think compulsive support of their religions unnecessary and unwarrantable? Can their piety alone be entrusted with the care of public worship? Ought their religions to be endowed, above all others, with extraordinary privileges, by which proselytes may be enticed from all

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\* Declaration on Rights. Art. I.

† Art. XVI.

others? We think too favorably of the justice and good sense of these denominations to believe that they either covet pre-eminences over their fellow citizens, or that they will be seduced by them from the common opposition to the measure.

Because, the bill implies, either that the civil magistrate is a competent judge of truth, or that he may employ religion as an engine of civil policy. The first is an arrogant pretension, falsified by the contradictory opinions of rulers in all ages and throughout the world: the second, an unhallowed perversion of the means of salvation.

Because, the establishment proposed by the bill is not requisite for the support of the Christian Religion. To say that it is, is a contradiction to the Christian Religion itself; for every page of it disavows a dependence on the powers of this world: it is a contradiction to fact; for it is known that this religion both existed and flourished, not only without the support of human laws, but in spite of every opposition from them; and not only during the period of miraculous aid, but long after it had been left to its own evidence, and the ordinary care of Providence. Nay, it is a contradiction in terms; for a religion not invented by human policy, must have pre-existed and been supported before it was established by human policy. It is, moreover, to weaken in those who profess this religion, a pious confidence in its innate excellence and the patronage of its Author; and to foster in those who still reject it, a suspicion, that its friends are too conscious of its fallacies to trust it to its own merits.

Because, experience witnesseth that ecclesiastical establishments, instead of maintaining the purity and efficacy of religion, have had a contrary operation. During almost fifteen centuries has the legal establishment of Christianity been on trial. What have been its fruits? More or less, in all places, pride and indolence in the clergy; ignorance and servility in the laity; in both, superstition, bigotry, and persecution. Inquire of the teachers of Christianity for the ages in which it appeared in its greatest lustre; those of every sect point to the ages prior to its incorporation with civil policy. Propose a restoration of this primitive state, in which its teachers depended on the voluntary rewards of their flocks; many of them predict its downfall. On which side ought their testimony to have greatest weight, when for, or when against their interest?



Because, the establishment in question is not necessary for the support of civil government. If it be urged as necessary for the support of civil government only as it is a means of supporting religion, and if it be not necessary for the latter purpose, it cannot be necessary for the former. If religion be not within the cognizance of civil government, how can its legal establishment be said to be necessary to civil government? What influence, in fact, have ecclesiastical establishments had on civil society? In some instances they have been seen to erect a spiritual tyranny on the ruins of the civil authority; in many instances they have been seen upholding the thrones of political tyranny; in no instance have they been seen the guardians of the liberties of the people. Rulers who wished to subvert the public liberty, may have found an established clergy convenient auxiliaries. A just government, instituted to secure and perpetuate it, needs them not. Such a government will be best supported by protecting every citizen in the enjoyment of his religion, with the same equal hand which protects his person and his property; by neither invading the equal rights of any sect, nor suffering any sect to invade those of another.

Because, the proposed establishment is a departure from that generous policy, which, offering an asylum to the persecuted and oppressed of every nation and religion, promised a lustre to our country, and an accession to the number of its citizens. What a melancholy mark is the bill, of sudden degeneracy! Instead of holding forth an asylum to the persecuted, it is itself a signal of persecution. It degrades from the equal rank of citizens all those whose opinions in religion do not bend to those of the legislative authority. Distant as it may be in its present form from the Inquisition, it differs from it only in degree. The one is the first step, the other the last, in the career of intolerance. The magnanimous sufferer under this cruel scourge in foreign regions, must view the bill as a beacon on our coast, warning him to seek some other haven, where liberty and philanthropy, in their due extent, may offer a more certain repose from his troubles.

Because, it will have a like tendency to banish our citizens. The allurements presented by other situations are every day thinning their number. To superadd a fresh motive to emigration, by revoking the liberty which they

now enjoy, would be the same species of folly which has dishonoured and depopulated flourishing kingdoms.

Because, it will destroy the moderation and harmony, which the forbearance of our laws to intermeddle with religion has produced amongst its several sects. Torrents of blood have been spilt in the old world by vain attempts of the secular arm to extinguish religious discord, by proscribing all difference in religious opinions.—Time has at length revealed the true remedy. Every relaxation of narrow and vigorous policy, wherever it has been tried, has been found to assuage the disease. The American theatre has exhibited proofs, that equal and complete liberty, if it does not wholly eradicate it, sufficiently destroys its malignant influence on the health and prosperity of the state. If, with the salutary effects of this system under our own eyes, we begin to contract the bounds of religious freedom, we know no name that will too severely reproach our folly. At least, let warning be taken at the first fruits of the threatened innovation. The very appearance of the bill has transformed “that christian forbearance, love and charity,” which of late mutually prevailed, into animosities and jealousies, which may not soon be appeased. What mischiefs may not be dreaded, should this enemy to the public quiet be armed with the force of a law!

Because, the policy of the bill is adverse to the diffusion of the light of Christianity. The first wish of those who enjoy this precious gift ought to be, that it may be imparted to the whole race of mankind. Compare the number of those who have as yet received it, with the number still remaining under the dominion of false religious, and how small is the former! Does the policy of the bill tend to lessen the disproportion? No: it at once discourages those who are strangers to the light of revelation, from coming into the region of it; and countenances, by example, the nations who continue in darkness, in shutting out those who might convey it to them. Instead of levelling as far as possible, every obstacle to the victorious progress of truth, the bill, with an ignoble and unchristian timidity, would circumscribe it with a wall of defence against the encroachments of error.

Because, attempts to enforce by legal sanctions, acts obnoxious to so great a proportion of citizens, tend to enervate the laws in general, and to slacken the bands of society. If it be difficult to execute any law which is not

generally deemed necessary or salutary, what must be the case where it is deemed invalid and dangerous? And what may be the effect of so striking an example of impotency in the government or its general authority?

Because, a measure of such general magnitude and delicacy ought not to be imposed, without the clearest evidence that it is called for by a majority of citizens: and no satisfactory method is yet proposed by which the voice of the majority in this case may be determined, or its influence secured. "The people of the respective counties are indeed requested to signify their opinion, respecting the adoption of the bill, to the next session of Assembly."—But the representation must be made equal, before the voice either of the representatives or the counties will be that of the people.—Our hope is, that neither of the former will, after due consideration, espouse the dangerous principle of the bill. Should the event disappoint us, it will still leave us in full confidence that a fair appeal to the latter will reverse the sentence against our liberties.

Because, finally, "the equal right of every citizen to the free exercise of his religion, according to the dictates of conscience," is held by the same tenure with all our other rights. If we recur to its origin, it is equally the gift of nature; if we weigh its importance it cannot be less dear to us; if we consult the "declaration of those rights which pertain to the good people of Virginia, as the basis and foundation of government,"\* it is enumerated with equal solemnity, or rather studied emphasis. Either, then, we must say, that the will of the legislature is the only measure of their authority, and that in the plenitude of this authority they may sweep away all our fundamental rights; or, that they are bound to leave this particular right untouched and sacred: either we must say, that they may controul the freedom of the press, may abolish the trial by jury, may swallow up the executive and judiciary powers of the state; nay, that they may despoil us of our very right of suffrage, and erect themselves into an independent and hereditary assembly; or we must say, that they have no authority to enact into law the bill under consideration. We, the subscribers, say, that the general assembly of this commonwealth, have no such authority; and that no effort may be omitted, on our part against so dangerous an usurpation, we oppose to it this remon-

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\* Preamble to the Declaration of Rights.



strance; earnestly praying, as we are in duty bound, that the Supreme Lawgiver of the Universe, by illuminating those to whom it is addressed, may, on the one hand, turn their councils from every act which would affront his holy prerogative, or violate the trust committed to them; and, on the other, guide them into every measure which may be worthy of his blessing, may redound to their own praise, and may establish more firmly the liberties, the prosperity and the happiness of the commonwealth."

N. B. The Editor is so fully convinced of the importance of the preceding Remonstrance, that he ventures to recommend to all his subscribers, to lend it for perusal to their neighbours, and to obtain the insertion of it in every newspaper in their district. If the American people were fully aware of the pernicious tendency of ecclesiastical establishments, they would rise in a body in opposition to them; and this conviction cannot be more certainly secured, than by an extended circulation of this most powerful and eloquent memorial and remonstrance against them.

### ON THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PARENTS.

We are too apt to consider ourselves as unconnected beings, and to imagine if we make some attainments in personal virtue and religion, we do all that God requires: but the influence which, in our observations on society, we find man possesses over his fellow-creatures, as well as the instruction of Divine Revelation, should convince us that it is our duty to be ever *teaching and admonishing one another*. We are called in a particular manner to watch over the conduct of those whom the God of nature has placed under our immediate care. This is exemplified in the melancholy end of the life of Eli, whose venerable character did not shield him from the displeasure of Heaven, for his weak indulgence of guilty sons: "In that day I will perform against Eli, all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him, that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth: because his sons made themselves vile, *and he restrained them not.*" I Sam. iii. 13.

A good example is without doubt one of the best means

of education, and without it we may give *line upon line* and *precept upon precept* in vain; but good example is not all that is needful. The youthful mind must be bent to serious thoughts; or it may pass the fairest forms of wisdom and holiness unheeded, whilst wantoning in pleasure and frivolity.

Parents have the advantage possessed by no other instructor, of watching over and helping to form the first thoughts and feelings of the child; of pointing out the beauty of virtue before the false colouring of passion has rendered vice attractive; of representing the joys of religion before the world has deadened his heart; of making themselves beloved by a thousand daily acts of kindness, and thereby giving force to their own counsel and example.—Education, however, is still a most arduous task. The child cannot be secluded till his habits are formed, and society will too often counteract parental influence: at the same time, the natural love of ease will affright the young traveller from the difficulties of the *narrow way which leadeth unto life*.

It is impossible to give particular rules which may be applied to the education of every child; different tempers will require difference of treatment; but there are some general principles of which the pious father or mother should never lose sight.

The extreme of indulgence and of restraint must be equally avoided; the one fosters headstrong passion, whilst the other represses all generous feeling. *Mild firmness* will best *restrain* the young from *making themselves vile*.

The child should be impressed with the idea that he is answerable to the all-seeing God for every action: this will teach him to watch over himself when no mortal eye is witness to his conduct.

He should be convinced that severity and gloom are not religion; that he who cherishes the social affections most warmly, and receives the blessings of this life most thankfully, is best fitted for the enjoyments of Heaven.

Christian parents! endeavour to associate with the idea of God, in the minds of your children, the endearing relation of a Father—a kind Father—the best of Fathers, who ever watches over all his children for good, and “who is not willing that any should perish.” Some such idea must have led the Jewish legislator solemnly to enjoin upon his brethren the following precept: “Hear, O Israel, the

Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Deut. vi. 4—7. Forget not, that the souls of your children, as well as your own souls, will be required of you. Whilst you are careful to provide your offspring with food and raiment, neglect not to enrich them with divine truth; and may the Father of all bless them, and make them your *joy and crown of rejoicing, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming!*

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*'Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.'*

O HAPPY creature! on whose brow  
 The light of youth is shed,  
 O'er whose glad path life's early flowers  
 In glowing beauty spread—  
 Forget not Him whose love hath poured  
 Around that golden light,  
 And tinged those opening buds of hope  
 With hues so softly bright;  
 But grateful to his altar bring  
 The garlands of life's glorious spring.

Thou tempted one! just entering  
 Upon 'enchanted ground,'  
 Ten thousand snares are spread for thee,  
 Ten thousand foes surround.  
 A dark and a deceitful band  
 Upon thy path they lower—  
 Trust not thine own unaided strength,  
 To save thee from their power.  
 Cling, cling to Him, whose mighty arm  
 Alone can shield thy soul from harm.

Thou, whose yet bright and joyous eye  
 Must soon be dimmed with tears,  
 To whom the hour of bitterness  
 Must come in coming years—



Teach early that confiding eye  
 To pierce the cloudy screen,  
 To where, above the storms of life,  
 Eternally serene,  
 A Father's love is beaming bright,  
 A Father's smile still sheds its light.

O born to die! the path of flowers  
 Thou dost exulting tread,  
 Leads to the dreary sepulchre,  
 The silence of the dead.  
 But if from youth thy spirit's love  
 Hath to thy God been given,  
 Death's icy hand will ope for thee  
 The radiant gates of heaven.  
 There, blest immortal! joys divine,  
 Transcendent, endless, shall be thine.

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## NOTICE TO SUBSCRIBERS.

Our subscribers will perceive that we have given twelve pages more in this number than were promised in our prospectus. We have done this in the hope that the number of our subscribers will enable us to bear the extra expenses thus incurred. Should we find, however, in the space of two or three months, that the number of our subscribers is not sufficient to secure us from loss, we shall be compelled to resort to our original promise.

Our subscribers will recollect that on the delivery of this number, their subscription will be expected.

All communications to the Editor must be *post paid*.

## CONDITIONS.

I. THE CHRISTIAN REFORMER, intended to promote a spirit of Free Enquiry and the practice of Piety and Virtue, will be published monthly, and contain 12 duodecimo pages—but should the number of subscribers warrant it, it will be increased to 24 pages, in the course of the year, without any additional charge.

II. Price, ONE DOLLAR a year, to be paid in advance.

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